

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

FEB 14 1989

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration FormNATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name North Wilmot Union Meetinghouse

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Location

street & number nw corner Breezy Hill, Piper Pond, Tewksbury & N. Wilmot ☐ not for publication n/a  
city, town Wilmot ☐ vicinity n/a  
state New Hampshire code NH county Merrimack code NH 013 zip code 03287

## 3. Classification

## Ownership of Property

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

## Category of Property

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

## Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
	<u>0</u> sites
	<u>0</u> structures
	<u>0</u> objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

n/aNumber of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register 0

## 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

NEW HAMPSHIRE

State or Federal agency and bureau

Date

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

## 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- ☒ entered in the National Register.  
☐ See continuation sheet.  
☐ determined eligible for the National Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.  
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.  
☐ removed from the National Register.  
☐ other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use	
Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
RELIGION: religious structure	RELIGION: religious structure
7. Description	
Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)
Federal	foundation granite
Greek Revival	walls clapboard
	roof asphalt
	other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The North Wilmot Union Meetinghouse is a simple clapboarded religious structure notable for its Federal and Greek Revival style detailing as well as its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The Meetinghouse property consists of a church and horseshed set on a small grassy lot measuring approximately .6 acre and situated in the northwest corner of four intersecting dirt roads. A stone wall marks the northern property boundary and a series of mature trees outline all but the front property line. The church is set with its gable front facing eastward. A horseshed is located to the rear of the meetinghouse.

The meetinghouse is a single story frame and clapboard structure resting on a granite block foundation and capped by an asphalt roof. A pavilion with double doorway fronts the main gabled mass which is punctuated by a two stage tower. The double doorway is recessed slightly from the facade and contains two four panel doors fronted by two granite steps and a single concrete stair. Full length five pane sidelights flank each side of the door. Pilaster strips are located between the doors and between doors and sidelights while a simple post and lintel frame surrounds the entrance. Centered above the entrance is a Palladian window consisting of a doublehung 12/12 window flanked by 3/3 window strips a single pane of glass wide and louvered blinds. Here too, panelled pilaster strips flank the central window, supporting a cornice above which is a lunette louvered fan. A simple raised molding surrounds the fan which is capped by a central keystone.

Ornate pilasters of the Tuscan order mark the two ends of the front pavilion and support cornice returns. A single doublehung 16/16 window punctuates the main building volume to each side of the pavilion. The windows exhibit simple surrounds and sills and are flanked by louvered blinds. Plain cornerboards and a beveled water table articulate the building. The cornice consists of cyma recta, ovolo and cavetto moldings.

Rising above the pavilion and punctuating the front gable is a tall clapboarded tower, square in plan. A single 6/6 window with blinds lights the front of the tower just below the cyma profile cornice which forms a base for the open belfry above. The belfry area is constructed of horizontal

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flush boards with an arched opening on each side. An arched molding runs along the top of the arch, suspended without pilasters or other supports, and capped by a plain keystone. Plain cornerboards mark the corners of this stage which is surrounded by a stick railing consisting of two horizontal rails intersected by vertical sticks alternating in two lengths. The top of the belfry is capped by a simpler stick balustrade with pointed pinnacles rising from the four corners.

Each of the side elevations measure four bays across, displaying doublehung 16/16 windows with blinds like those seen on the facade.

The rear elevation measures four bays across and is bisected by a central brick chimney rising the height of the building. The eaves on this elevation are flush with the wall surface, ending in shallow cornice returns. The lot slopes away from the building on this side to accommodate a basement level and as a result stonework is exposed at the base. To the viewer's left a small vertical board door and 12/8 window punctuate the basement level while to the right are two 12/8 windows and a vertical panel door. All of the openings exhibit simple surrounds with lipped lintels.

Behind the meetinghouse is a set of open horsesheds with three stalls constructed of vertical boards and rough hewn timbers and capped by a metal roof. Resting on a stone foundation on the south side is an enclosed area finished in horizontal beadboard, housing a two hole outhouse.

Inside, the original pews have been replaced by folding wooden chairs. Four panel doors open from the vestibule area. A ticket window and closet area are located to one side of the entrance at the rear of the sanctuary. There is a door on the other side giving access to the bell pull and belfry. Wide board wainscoting surrounds the room, above this the walls are sheathed in fiberboard. Pressed metal covers the ceiling and coving area which is decorated in a sunflower motif. A low stage extends along the front of the sanctuary with a small closet and curtained area in each corner. The kerosene fixtures on the walls were a recent donation. A chandelier holding four kerosene lamps hangs from a central medallion. Wooden stairs in the southwest corner provide access to the kitchen below. This area is finished in horizontal boards.

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Original Appearance

With the exception of its move in 1850 a half mile from its original location, the exterior of the meetinghouse has survived virtually unchanged since its construction in 1829. The updating of the tower with corner pinnacles may date to the mid 19th century although documentation of this has not emerged.

Changes to the interior over the years have been more substantive, resulting both from changing styles and the actions of benefactors over the years. As originally constructed, singing seats were at the rear of the sanctuary, facing the pulpit and probably at the second floor level. There were both floor and wall pews, the latter being one or two steps above the floor. All of the pews were thought to be box pews.<sup>1</sup> In 1867 a new floor was laid and the varying levels of the floor and wall pews were eliminated. It was voted that the pews should be "circling" and at the same time the walls were papered, wool carpeting installed and damask curtaining purchased to frame the windows. A pulpit, sofa, two chairs and a black walnut table were purchased.<sup>2</sup> The pulpit, sofa with horsehair stuffing and table are still extant. Extensive alterations were made to the interior of the church building in 1915 with funds from Mrs. Edward Kimball who owned a summer home in North Wilmot and became interested in using the building as a community center as well as for worship services. Despite a court injunction by several citizens to stop the proposed renovations, the pews were removed and replaced by movable seats, the choir loft was removed and a furnace and kitchen were constructed in the basement. (Each of these interior changes may not be significant, but their cumulative effect reflects the evolution of the church through different fashions of interior arrangement.) The bell in the tower was installed about 1917 and the horsesheds in back of the church were built by men of the neighborhood.<sup>3</sup>

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### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Florence Langley, With Prayer and Psalm. Canaan, NH: Phoenix Publishing, 1981, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 28.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally    ☐ statewide    ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria    ☐ A    ☐ B    ☒ C    ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)    ☒ A    ☒ B    ☐ C    ☐ D    ☐ E    ☐ F    ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Architecture	1829-1915	1829
		1850
		1867
		1915
	Cultural Affiliation	
	n/a	
Significant Person	Architect/Builder	
n/a	Josiah Stearns, builder	

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The North Wilmot Meetinghouse, constructed in 1829 with subsequent alterations in 1850, is significant as a unique example of vernacular New Hampshire architecture, embodying distinctive characteristics of various 19th century architectural styles including the Federal, Greek Revival and Gothic Revival. Despite its religious use, the Meetinghouse should be considered eligible for the National Register by virtue of its architectural significance and integrity. One of the few remaining vestiges of a once populated area, the church now stands alone in the wilderness. The significance of the building's removal from its original location about twenty years after its construction is similarly not felt to be inconsistent with its architectural value but rather is part of its cumulative history. Its period of significance runs from the date of construction (1829) until it reached the configuration it retains today (1915).

The Meetinghouse survives virtually intact as a fine vernacular example of the transition from the Federal style to the Greek Revival style. The form of the church, a gable roofed main block with a two stage belfry above the main gable end, is the most common early 19th century church form visible in the region. The doublehung 12/12 windows, the Palladian window over the entrance, and the arched belfry openings are all typical of the Federal style. The Tuscan pilasters, handcrafted out of wood, are closely derived from Classical architecture and found new popularity in the classically-derived styles of the early 19th century. The four panel doors, full sidelights and cornice returns are Greek Revival elements. To these dominant architectural styles, pyramidal pinnacles at the corners of the meetinghouse belfry were later added, suggesting an interest in, rather than a detailed knowledge of, the Gothic Revival.

In comparison with many of the country churches found in neighboring communities, the North Wilmot meetinghouse is distinguished by several sophisticated details, more commonly found on larger, more ambitious religious buildings. These include its Palladin window, front pavilion and especially its Tuscan pilasters. The transitional Federal-Greek Revival elements which characterize the Meetinghous also make it somewhat unique in

☒ See continuation sheet

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

- Langley, Florence. Glimpse of the Past: A History of Wilmot, New Hampshire.  
Canaan, NH: Phoenix Publishing, 1986.
- Langley, Florence. When School Bells Rang: A History of the Wilmot, New Hampshire Schools. Canaan, NH: Phoenix Publishing, 1976.
- Langley, Florence. With Prayer and Psalm: A History of the Wilmot, New Hampshire Churches. Canaan, NH: Phoenix Publishing, 1981.
- North Wilmot Union Meetinghouse records, stored at treasurer (M. Howard) and clerk's (T.Minard) houses, Wilmot, NH.

☐ See continuation sheet

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)  
has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings  
Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering  
Record # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

### Specify repository:

Meetinghouse Society treasurer's  
and clerk's houses.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property less than one acre (0.6 acre)

### UTM References

A 1 9 2 6 2 0 5 0 4 8 1 9 3 7 5  
Zone Easting Northing

C                                               
Zone Easting Northing

B                                               
Zone Easting Northing

D                                               
Zone Easting Northing

☐ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet.

Boundaries of the nominated property are highlighted in yellow on the attached map.

☒ See continuation sheet

### Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the hominated property are co-extensive with those of the parcel acquired for the church in 1850 and upon which it was relocated. This is the parcel which has been associated with the church since its removal in 1850 from its original 1829 site.

☐ See continuation sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lisa Mausolf, Preservation Specialist

organization Upper Valley-Lake Sunapee Council

date May 1988

street & number 314 First NH Bank Building

telephone (603) 448-1680

city or town Lebanon

state NH

zip code 03766

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the region, where many of the churches were initially constructed in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and updated at the midcentury when the Greek Revival and Gothic Revival shared popularity as opposed to the earlier Federal-Greek Revival emphasis of the Wilmot Church. As will be discussed, the North Wilmot Meetinghouse bore striking similarities to the Wilmot Center Meetinghouse, no longer extant. Other religious structures which may have influenced or have been influenced by the North Wilmot Meetinghouse are not apparent in nearby communities. Both the Springfield Town Hall/Howard Memorial Methodist church (listed on the National Register 6/5/86) and the First Congregational Church in East Andover are two story, Greek and Gothic Revival remodellings of meetinghouses constructed in the 1790s. Both feature paneled corner pilasters and pilastered two stage square towers; only the East Andover building is elaborated by a front pavilion. The Salisbury Congregational Church and Salisbury Baptist Meetinghouse both feature front pavilions and c. 1830 pinnacled steeple additions but are elaborated by more extensive Gothic detailing including pointed arch openings and pinnacled entrances. The Center Meetinghouse in Grafton is also a simple, two story block built in the 1790s and later updated with Greek Revival elements including a projecting cornice with simple frieze and entablatured entrance. The early 19th century Baptist Church in New London, the only one of the community's religious structures to predate 1900, is similarly a larger, two story building although like North Wilmot's smaller church, it too displays a front pavilion and an arched belfry.

The North Wilmot Meetinghouse was built at the top of Tewksbury Hill in North Wilmot in 1829. Five denominations, Congregational, Christian Baptist, Freewill Baptist, Universalist and Methodist united in its construction. The construction of the church building was financed chiefly through the sale of pews. To settle disagreement as to where the meetinghouse should be located, a vote was held. Because the north part of town had the greatest population and the most votes the meetinghouse was placed on Tewksbury Hill. The meetinghouse was the second house of worship to be built in Wilmot and was apparently erected soon after the First Union Meetinghouse at Wilmot Center and with marked similarities.<sup>1</sup> The Wilmot Center building was struck by lightning and destroyed in 1957, thus making the North Wilmot church the oldest remaining religious structure in town.<sup>2</sup>

Both the Wilmot Center and North Wilmot churches shared common features including a projecting front pavilion, double doorway, and square tower with pointed corner pinnacles. The Wilmot Center structure was apparently drafted by a committee who came up with the following specifications: "The order and manner in which the house is to be finished 40 feet square on



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ground, 15 foot posts, four windows on each side except front, boarded and clapboarded and shingled with good materials, body painted white, roof red with cupola suitable for such building, underpinned with hewn stone on three sides, the whole work to be done in the Tuscan order and of suitable material for a building".<sup>3</sup> It was voted to award the building contract to one person for completion and it is believed that this man was probably Samuel Stearns.<sup>4</sup> It appears that when first built, the Center Meetinghouse had a spire, for in 1867 it was voted to "take off the spire down to the roof over the bell, and put on a suitable roof over the bell and suitable picks".<sup>5</sup> The four "picks" referred to were eight feet high and sixteen inches square at the base and apparently quite similar to those capping the North Wilmot Meetinghouse. Differences between the two buildings relate to the architectural styles of the decorative details on each. In the case of the Center Church, the pointed arches of the Gothic were used while a Palladian window and more Greek decoration embellishes that in North Wilmot. Despite the specification of a "Tuscan order" the Center Church did not have the elaborate Tuscan pilasters which embellish the North Wilmot Church. According to the local history, the North Wilmot meetinghouse was erected by Josiah Stearns, which would explain the considerable similarities between the two buildings.<sup>6</sup>

In 1850 the North Wilmot Meetinghouse was moved to a more accessible location from the top of Tewksbury Hill to its present location at the four corners, about a half mile to the south and opposite the then extant District No. 10 Schoolhouse.<sup>7</sup> It is said that the building was moved on rollers with thirty yoke of oxen. Sledges filled with rocks had to be fastened on behind to act as a brake so the building would not go down the hill too quickly. Meetinghouse records indicate that the moving operation cost four hundred dollars. Interior plastering of the building was put out to bid in 1850. There are no society records from 1851 to 1866 and thus any renovations which took place after the move and during these years are unknown. Documentation that the corner pinnacles on the Center Meetinghouse were not original to that building would seem to suggest that those on the North Wilmot Meetinghouse were also added later, possibly after the building was moved but possibly as early as the 1830's.

Relatively little is known about the church's builder. Josiah Stearns (1788-1857) was born in Pittsfield, New Hampshire on March 10, 1788, the son of John and Sarah Lane Stearns who came originally from Deerfield. Josiah came to North Wilmot in 1811 and was a master carpenter, as well as a stone cutter. It is said that he framed nearly all of the buildings in North Wilmot. He was also a selectman and a representative to the New Hampshire General Court.<sup>8</sup>

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Historic maps tell us that the North Wilmot Meetinghouse was at one time a key element in a thriving village located on Piper Pond near the Springfield townline. The District No. 10 Schoolhouse was built in 1843. School was last held in this building, located across the road and south of the meetinghouse in 1888. It was subsequently taken down.<sup>9</sup> In addition to the church and school the village at North Wilmot also included a sawmill, blacksmith's shop and about a dozen houses in the immediate vicinity, many of which have disappeared over the years.

The North Wilmot Church was called a union meetinghouse because it was used by five different denominations, Congregational, Christian Baptist, Freewill Baptist, Universalist and Methodist, each one allotted a certain Sunday each month. The number of days each denomination could use the house for preaching was determined by the number of pews owned.<sup>10</sup> The church served an area measuring several miles in each direction from the Church. In 1917 the building became a Congregational Church. For many years Sunday School was held in the building. Copies of the books used are in one of the church closets, with book plates dated 1870. After the 1915 alterations, church suppers, plays and dances were held here for a number of years. Today the church is no longer used for regular worship services although Camp Wilmot, a church school camp in North Wilmot has provided Sunday worship services in the summer months in recent years. During July and August of 1988, churches in Wilmot, South Danbury, Danbury and New London will share services, coming to North Wilmot on a rotating basis, as in times gone by.

A service of remembrance to mark its 150th anniversary was held in the building on July 8, 1979. Every third year Wilmot's Old Home Day is held here as are occasional weddings. Although the population of the town has decreased, the well maintained North Wilmot Church continues to stand, unique in history and location, the oldest extant church in town.

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**FOOTNOTES**

<sup>1</sup>Florence Langley, With Psalm and Prayer: A History of the Wilmot, New Hampshire Churches. Canaan, NH: Phoenix Publishing, 1981, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, p. 18.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup>Florence Langley, Glimpse of the Past: A History of Wilmot, New Hampshire. Canaan, NH: Phoenix Publishing, 1986, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup>Florence Langley, When School Bells Ring: The History of Wilmot, New Hampshire Schools. Canaan, NH: Phoenix Publishing, 1976, p. 41.

<sup>10</sup>Langley, With Psalm and Prayer, p. 23.

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Beginning at a drill hole set in the end of a stone wall on the westerly side of Breezy Hill Road, said wall being approximately 135 feet Northerly of the four corner intersection of Piper Pond, Tewksbury, North Wilmot and Breezy Hill Roads;

Thence North 81 28' 05" West 138.40' along said stone wall to a drill hole set at an angle point in said stone wall;

Thence continuing North 76 06' 22" west to an iron rod set;

Thence South 11 44' 05" West 149.44' to an iron bolt set in a drill hole on the Northerly sideline of Piper Pond Road, said iron bolt in drill hole being approximately 200' westerly of the junction of the four road intersection above mentioned.

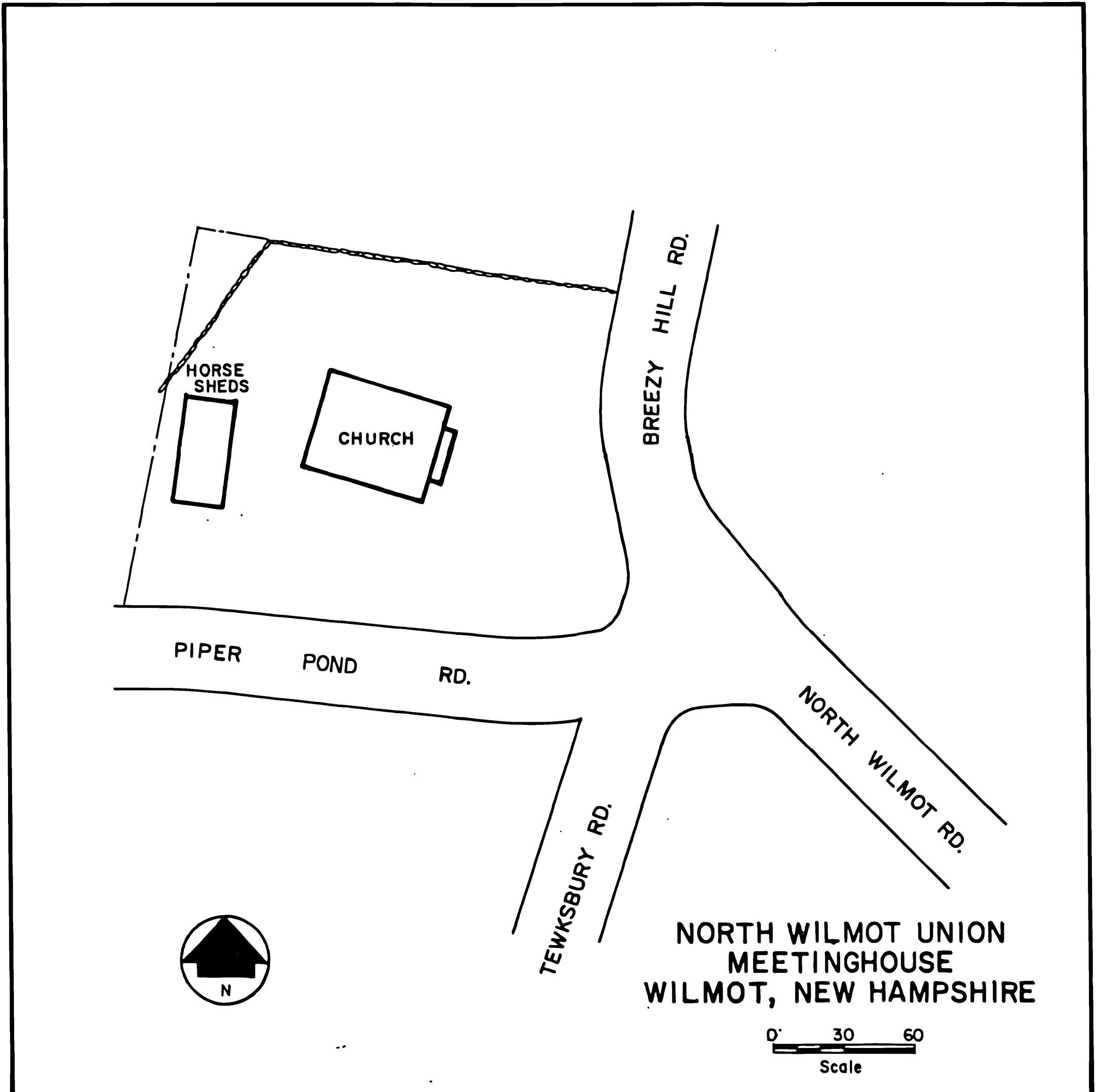
Source: Deed dated 28 September 1987.

This certifies that the appearance has not changed since these photographs were taken.

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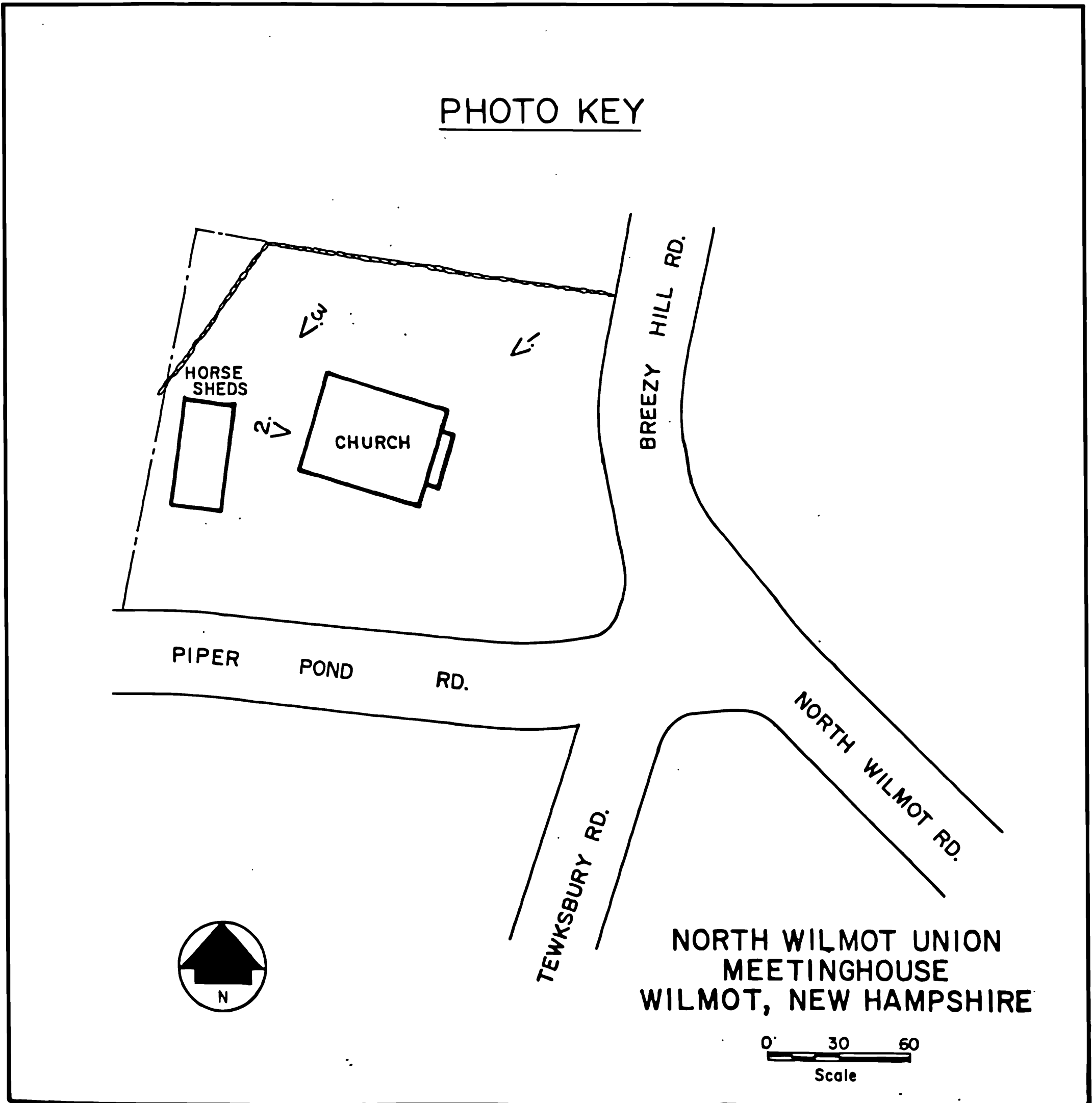
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OWNER

North Wilmot Union Meetinghouse Society, Inc.  
c/o R.K. Minard  
Fiddlers Green  
Danbury, NH 03230